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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8447

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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR REEKER

DOD FOR USDP FLOURNOY, ASD VERSHBOW, AND DASD TOWNSEND

JCS FOR THE CHAIRMAN

STATE FOR AMB. HOLBROOKE; EUR/SCE; EUR/RPM; PM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: IMPEDIMENTS TO MACEDONIA'S DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) I request senior-level intervention to resolve bureaucratic impediments to the long-planned deployment of 79 Macedonian soldiers to Afghanistan. This deployment will allow the Vermont National Guard to double its reconnaissance and police mentor teams, from 4 to 8 of each. Obtaining practical Macedonian participation in operations in Afghanistan remains a top priority for Embassy Skopje, on which I and my staff have engaged PM Gruevski and other top officials.

#### BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) Macedonia is committed to embed 79 troops with the Vermont National Guard (VTNG) deployment to Afghanistan February - November 2010. Vermont has had a vibrant State Partnership Program (SPP) with Macedonia since 1995. This deployment has been long-discussed with the Macedonian armed forces and government, including at Bilateral Defense Consultations in Washington in 2007 and, more formally, 2008. In October 2008, the Macedonian Defense Minister briefed the potential deployment to Secretary Gates, who welcomed it and remarked that this was a natural progression of the SPP. In May 2009, Macedonian Defense Minister Konjanovski wrote to me formally confirming the offer to deploy. In the meantime, GoM military and civilian officials discussed the deployment many times with VTNG officials. Finally, in July of this year, EUCOM planners visited Macedonia to cement the Macedonian commitment and commence concrete planning.

#### SUDDEN PROBLEM

¶3. (SBU) Despite this preparation, we have now received word through DoD, EUCOM, and USAREUR channels that some in the bureaucracy believe that this deployment was not properly planned or vetted. Lack of formal instructions has placed this deployment in jeopardy, and needs to be solved now.

#### ACTIONS REQUIRED:

¶4. (SBU) These are the steps needed now:

-- DoD needs to formalize the Macedonian co-deployment with the Vermont National Guard and task the unified commands to provide all necessary support.

-- DoS needs to request that the Macedonian soldiers (because they are from a non-NATO country) attend the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk with VTNG from Oct. 30-Nov 19. Funding for travel to this training is also needed.

-- VTNG will need to send a team here in late August to familiarize the Macedonians on U.S. TTP and U.S. crew served weapons. USEUCOM needs to receive a formal request to support the co-deployment by providing weapons and ammunition or allowing use of Camp Bondsteel for weapons familiarization.

COMMENT

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15. (SBU) It is no small thing to ask a small country like Macedonia to increase its commitment to Afghanistan, but time and time again Macedonia has stepped up in Iraq and Afghanistan, taken its responsibilities seriously, and performed exceptionally. Macedonian soldiers deploy beyond the wire and have proven their mettle in combat. I personally have urged Prime Minister Gruevski, Defense Minister Konjanovski, and CHOD LTG Stojanovski to proceed with the co-deployment with the Vermont National Guard. In addition to the benefits to our efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, resolving the bureaucratic hold-ups to this co-deployment is critical to our credibility in Macedonia. Therefore I request senior-level intervention to issue the necessary instructions to keep this deployment on track.

REEKER